

## Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 668

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2705

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

FOR ARA/CEN DIRECTOR DAVID LAZAR ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, CS

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FIGUERES ON BURSTIN/LAZAR

MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATION

REFS: (A) SAN JOSE 2637; (B) BELIEZE 383

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH ME EVENING JUNE 29, FORMER PRESIDENT FIGUERES SAID THAT REFERENCE IN BURSTIN'S MEMO TO POSSIBLE U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION SURPRISED HIM GREATLY BECAUSE BASED ON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF PRESENT THINKING IN THE UNITED STATES, HE DID NOT BELIEVE WE WOULD WISH TO INTERVENE WITH TROOPS ANYWHERE. ADDED THAT EVEN IF THERE WERE PEOPLE WITH SUCH THOUGHTS, HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT A STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL WOULD EXPRESS THEM. FIGUERES SAID THAT, NEVERTHELESS, BURSTIN IS COMPLETELY HONEST AND THAT HE CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT SOME REMARK MIGHT HAVE BEEN MADE WHICH LED TO CONCLUSION REPORTED.

2. AFTER EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR FIGUERES' UNDERSTANDING ON THAT POINT, I ADDED THAT, CONTRARY TO BURSTIN'S ACCOUNT WE WOULD NOT PRESUME TO PREDICT WHERE THE COSTA RICAN ECONOMY WILL BE IN SIX MONTHS NOR WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCE. NEITHER WOULD LAZAR HAVE ACCUSED PRESIDENT ODUBER OF DOING NOTHING

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TO DEAL WITH THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS.

3. BASED ON HIS READING OF LAZAR'S MEMCON, FIGUERES FURTHER DESCRIBED THE CONVERSATION AS A TYPICAL BURSTIN PLOY OF PLAYING INTELLECTUAL GAMES AND BACKING OTHERS AGAINST A WALL OR INTO A CORNER WITH A SERIES OF HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS WHICH THEN ELICIT SOME INAPPROPRIATE OR UNINTENDED ANSWER. FIGUERES SAID THAT THE ONLY THING TO DO NOW WOULD BE TO WAIT FOR LAZAR'S RESPONSE TO BURSTIN IN ORDER TO PUT THE WHOLE THING IN SOME PROPER CONTEXT.

4. FIGUERES SAID HE HAD CAUTIONED BURSTIN TO BE SURE THAT A COPY OF HIS MEMORANDUM NEVER FELL INTO ODUBER'S HANDS BECAUSE THERE WAS NO TELLING HOW OR WHEN ODUBER MIGHT WISH TO USE IT. FIGUERES EVEN ENVISIONED THE POSSIBILITY THAT IF ODUBER GOT HOLD OF THE MEMORANDUM HE MIGHT LEAK IT TO THE PRESS AND THEN DENOUNCE IT.

5. I TOOK OCCASION TO STRESS IT IS TRUE THAT COSTA RICA'S IMPORTANCE DUE IN LARGE PART TO RESPECT WITH WHICH ITS VOICE IS HEARD BASED ON ITS CONTINUED DEMOCRATIC TRADITION PLUS ITS COURAGE AND INDEPENDENCE. IS SUGGESTED THAT MUCH OF THIS WOULD BE LOST IF THERE WERE AN INTERRUPTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. I ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT ONLY "INTERVENTION" THE UNITED STATES WOULD EVEN CONSIDER TO HEAD OFF SUCH AN EVENTUALITY WOULD BE TO TALK TO OUR CONSTA RICAN FRIENDS. ABSOLUTELY NO ONE THAT I KNEW OF IN WASHINGTON ENTERTAINED ANY THOUGHTS OF MILITARY INTERVENTION. WE BELIEVE IT IS UP TO EACH COUNTRY TO DETERMINE AND RUN ITS OWN AFFAIRS AND UP TO THE UNITED STATES TO PROTECT ITS OWN INTERESTS ACCORDINGLY.

6. FIGUERES SAID THAT COSTA RICA CONSIDERS THE UNITED STATES TO BE ITS DEAREST AND OLDEST FRIEND AND WOULD NOT WISH TO DO ANYTHING TO INTERRUPT THAT FRIENDSHIP. HE SAID HE DID NOT ENVISION ANY ANTI-CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE. THERE WAS NO CHANCE OF AN ATTEMPTED COUP D'ETAT FROM EITHER THE RIGHT OR LEFT SUCCEEDING, AND NEITHER HE NOR ANYONE ELSE IN THE LIBERATION PARTY WOULD CARRY OUT A COUP AGAINST THEIR OWN PARTY'S GOVERNMENT. FIGUERES SAID ANY CHANGES THAT MIGHT COME ABOUT IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE THROUGH ODUBER DECIDING TO RESIGN AND TURN POWER OVER TO VICE-PRESIDENT CASTILLO. HE INSISTED THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS SO BAD THAT THE COUNTRY COULD  
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BE IN A CRISIS BY THE END OF THE YEAR, BUT HE SAID NO ONE COULD PREDICT EXACTLY HOW THIS WOULD BE TREATED OR WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE. FIGUERES TOOK THE OCCASION TO STRESS THAT HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING PRESIDENT AGAIN, BUT IS PREPARED TO SERVE AS PRIME MINISTER OR MINISTER OF ECONOMY TO HELP GET THE COUNTRY OUT OF ITS PRESENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES.

7. I TOLD FIGUERES THAT I WOULD BE SPEAKING TO LAZAR DURING

MY VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN THE SECOND WEEK OF JULY AND WOULD BE  
IN TOUCH WITH HIM AGAIN UPON MY RETURN.

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